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ABSTRACT

Private school teachers were asked in a survey to rank the following eight goals for students in order according to their importance: (1) basic literacy skills (reading, math, writing, speaking); (2) academic excellence, or mastery of the subject matter of the course; (3) citizenship (understanding institutions and public values); (4) specific occupational skills; (5) good work habits and self-discipline; (6) personal growth and fulfillment (self-esteem, personal efficacy, self-knowledge); (7) human relations skills (cultural understanding, getting along with others); and (8) moral or religious values. Teaching basic literacy skills was considered very important by 48 percent of the respondents, followed closely by moral or religious values (43 percent and personal growth and fulfillment (40 percent). About one-fourth of the teachers ranked good work habits and self-discipline and academic excellence among the two most important goals for students, while 14 percent believed that human relations skills were very important. Only a few teachers considered citizenship and special occupational skills very important, while 46 and 86 percent respectively considered them unimportant. In general, private school teachers had positive attitudes about their schools, administrators, fellow teachers, and students. An explanation of the survey methodology with comments on data reliability is provided, and data from the survey are displayed in seven tables. (JD)

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Private School Teachers' Opinions, 1985-86

Private school teachers consider basic literacy skills, moral or religious values, and personal growth and fulfillment as very important goals for their students. Between 40 and 48 percent of private school teachers ranked these goals as "most important" or "next most important" (ranks of "1" and "2" out of 8).

These are some of the results of the 1985-86 Private School Study[1] funded by the Center for Education Statistics.[2] The survey obtained data from a sample of private school principals and teachers. Among the information collected from teachers were their rankings of eight educational goals for students and their opinions on various issues relating to their schools, administrators, fellow teachers, and students. Since the sample for the survey did not include any private schools that began operating after 1983-84, the data presented in this report are weighted national totals for private school teachers in schools that were in existence in 1983.

Educational Goals for Students

Private school teachers were asked to rank the following eight goals for students in order according to their importance:

- Basic literacy skills (reading, math, writing, speaking),

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[1] To be included in the study, a school had to meet the following criteria: be privately administered, offer instruction at first grade level or above, require attendance at least four hours per day and at least 160 days per year, and not be located in a private home used as a residence. Consequently, schools providing only kindergarten or pre-kindergarten instruction were not included in this study.

[2] This study was conducted by Westat, Inc., under contract to the Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

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- Academic excellence, or mastery of the subject matter of the course,
- Citizenship (understanding institutions and public values),
- Specific occupational skills,
- Good work habits and self-discipline,
- Personal growth and fulfillment (self-esteem, personal efficacy, self-knowledge),
- Human relations skills (cultural understanding, getting along with others), and
- Moral or religious values.

Teaching basic literacy skills was considered very important (ranks of "1" or "2") by 48 percent of private school teachers (table 1), followed closely by moral or religious values (43 percent) and personal growth and fulfillment (40 percent). Relatively few teachers considered these goals as unimportant (ranks of "7" or "8"): 18 percent for moral or religious values, 9 percent for basic literacy skills, and 5 percent for personal growth.

About one-fourth of private school teachers ranked good work habits and self-discipline (28 percent) and academic excellence (22 percent) among the two most important goals for students, while 14 percent believed that human relations skills were very important. Only a few teachers considered citizenship (less than 3 percent) or specific occupational skills (2 percent) very important goals, and many considered them unimportant (46 and 86 percent, respectively).

Teachers' perceptions of the importance of some of these educational goals varied somewhat by the religious orientation and instructional level[3] of their schools and by sex of teacher, but generally not by years of teaching experience (table 2). Teaching moral or religious values was rated among the top two goals more frequently by teachers in religiously-oriented schools (Catholic or other religious)[4] than by teachers in nonsectarian schools (those with no religious orientation). Teachers in nonsectarian schools were more likely than those in religiously-oriented schools to rank the following goals as very important:

- Personal growth,
- Good work habits and self-discipline, and

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[3] Instructional level was defined as follows: "elementary" was a school that had no grade higher than the 8th; "secondary" was a school that had no grade lower than the 7th; "combined" elementary/secondary was a school that had grades higher than the 8th and lower than the 7th; and "other" schools were those that provided only alternative (non-traditional) instruction, special education, or vocational/technical curricula.

[4] Schools with a religious orientation other than Catholic represent many different denominations. However, the sample size for this study was too small to produce reliable separate estimates for these denominations.

- Human relations skills.

Teachers in regular elementary, secondary, or combined schools ranked moral or religious values as among the top two goals more frequently than teachers in other specialized schools (primarily alternative and special education schools), while teachers in other specialized schools ranked both personal growth and human relations skills as very important more frequently than teachers in regular schools.[5] Elementary school teachers were more likely than secondary teachers to rank basic literacy skills among the top two goals, whereas secondary teachers were more likely than elementary teachers to view academic excellence as very important. Male teachers tended to rank academic excellence more highly than female teachers, while more female than male teachers ranked basic literacy skills and personal growth as very important.[6]

Teachers' Opinions

The survey questionnaire also obtained teachers' agreement or disagreement (on a 6-point scale) with 16 statements relating to their schools. In this report, ratings of "1," "2," and "3" have been combined to indicate disagreement with the statement, while ratings of "4," "5," and "6" have been combined to indicate agreement.

In general, private school teachers had positive attitudes about their schools, administrators, fellow teachers, and students. For each statement, 74 percent or more of the teachers responded in a positive direction--agreeing with positive statements and disagreeing with negative statements (table 3). For the following seven items, 85 percent or more of the teachers responded positively:

- Staff members maintain high standards of performance for themselves (93 percent agreed);
- The amount of student tardiness and class cutting in this school interferes with my teaching (89 percent disagreed);
- There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members (88 percent agreed);
- The level of student misbehavior and/or drug or alcohol use in this school interferes with my teaching (86 percent disagreed);
- The principal does a poor job of getting resources for this school (85 percent disagreed);

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[5] The similarity between these findings and those by religious orientation may result in part from the relationship between these two school characteristics: between 85 and 89 percent of regular elementary, secondary, and combined schools were religiously oriented, whereas 74 percent of other specialized schools were nonsectarian.

[6] The differences by sex of teacher may be related to instructional level: 41 percent of all male teachers taught in secondary schools compared with 14 percent of female teachers.

- The principal lets staff members know what is expected of them (85 percent agreed); and

- The principal is interested in innovation and new ideas (85 percent agreed).

Since there was general agreement on the opinion items, there were few differences by school or teacher characteristics. However, the percent of teachers indicating strong agreement ("6") or disagreement ("1") showed some consistent differences; tables 4, 5, and 6 show selected opinion items by school and teacher characteristics. In general, elementary school teachers tended to be more positive than secondary school teachers, with such differences occurring for 14 of the 16 items. The two items without significant differences between elementary and secondary school teachers were:

- The level of student misbehavior and/or drug or alcohol use in this school interferes with my teaching (table 4) and

- Necessary materials are readily available as needed by the staff (not shown in tables).

In addition, female teachers were more positive than male teachers on most of the opinion items. Teaching experience was related to attitudes regarding student misbehavior (or drug and alcohol use) and student tardiness interfering with teaching: a larger proportion of teachers with 10 or more years of experience strongly disagreed with these statements compared with teachers with less than 5 years of experience (table 4).

Survey Methodology and Data Reliability

The tabulations are estimates from the 1985-86 Private School Study conducted by Westat, Inc. under contract with the Center for Education Statistics (CES). Westat's Project Director was J. Michael Brick, and the Assistant Project Director was Lucinda Gray. Report preparation was coordinated by Elizabeth Farris; this bulletin was written by Elizabeth Farris. The CES Project Officer was Jeffrey Williams.

The study was a multi-stage probability sample of private schools across the United States done in conjunction with a survey of library and media centers. The first stage was the sampling of 75 areas, consisting of counties or groups of contiguous counties, with probabilities proportional to the square root of the population in the area. The second stage was the selection of schools within the sampled areas with probabilities proportional to the square root of enrollment. The third and final stage was the sampling of teachers within the sampled schools. The schools within the areas were drawn from lists of schools created in the same sample areas for the 1983 Private School Survey. Since the lists were not updated, schools established after 1983 were not generally eligible for sampling. The estimates for the 1985-86 study are valid for teachers in schools that were in existence in 1983.

Of the 1,700 private schools sampled, 313 schools were determined to be outside the scope of the survey. Many of these schools had either closed or only served children below the first grade level. In addition to this restriction, a school was not considered in-scope unless it had a school day of at least 4 hours, was in session for at least 160 days per year, was located in a place other than a private home, and was privately administered.

A total of 1,174 school questionnaires were obtained from the 1,387 in-scope schools, resulting in an overall response rate of 85 percent. The data were collected by mail with telephone followups to increase the response rates. The response rate was over 90 percent in Catholic schools and about 80 percent in all the other schools.

On average, about 5 teachers were selected from each sampled school. A maximum of 10 teachers were selected from any one school. The school principal and librarian were not eligible for sampling even if they did some teaching because they were the planned respondents for the school and library questionnaires. Responses were obtained from 5,295 teachers, which translates into an overall response rate of 76 percent including all levels of nonresponse.

National estimates were constructed by weighting the responses to the questionnaires from the sample schools and teachers. Since the estimates were obtained from a sample of teachers, they are subject to sampling variability. An estimate of the magnitude of sampling variability is the coefficient of variation, which is the standard error of the estimate expressed as a percent of the estimate. The standard error of an estimate is a measure of the variability between the values of the estimate calculated from different samples and the value of the statistic in the population.

The interval from two standard errors below the estimate to two standard errors above the estimate includes the average of all possible samples in about 95 percent of all possible samples. This is called a 95 percent confidence interval. For example, the estimated percent of private school teachers with a bachelor's degree is 64 percent; its coefficient of variation is 2.4 percent; and the standard error is 1.5 percent (64 percent times .024). A 95 percent confidence interval for this statistic extends from 64 - 2(1.5) to 64 + 2(1.5), or from 61 to 67 percent.

Estimates of the standard errors for the estimates were computed using a balanced half sampling technique, known as balanced repeated replications. Comparisons cited in the text are significant at the 95 percent confidence level. Some representative statistics and their estimated coefficients of variation are included in table 7.

Survey estimates are also subject to errors of reporting and errors made in the collection of the data. These errors, called nonsampling errors, can sometimes bias the data. While general sampling theory can be used to determine how to estimate the sampling variability of an estimate, nonsampling errors are not easy to measure and usually require either an experiment to be conducted as part of the data collection procedure or use of data external to the study. Such studies are part of an ongoing effort to quantify problems in the data and to correct data collection procedures to eliminate or minimize biases that may enter the estimates. Separate reports on sources and measures of nonsampling error will be issued.

Table 1.--Private school teachers' rankings of eight educational goals for students: United States, 1985-86

Educational goal	Percent of teachers ranking each goal as							
	Most important 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Least important 8
Basic literacy skills.....	29	19	13	11	11	8	6	3
Academic excellence.....	10	12	12	12	13	17	17	7
Citizenship.....	(*)	2	4	8	14	25	37	9
Specific occupational skills.....	1	1	1	2	3	6	17	69
Good work habits and self-discipline..	8	20	24	22	16	8	3	(*)
Personal growth and fulfillment.....	18	22	17	15	14	8	4	1
Human relations skills.....	3	11	18	20	22	17	8	2
Moral or religious values.....	31	12	11	10	9	10	9	9

*Less than 1 percent.

NOTE.--Percents are based on 404,000 teachers. Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Table 2.--Percent of private school teachers ranking goals for students as very important ("1" and "2" out of 8), by school and teacher characteristics: United States, 1985-86

School and teacher characteristic	Teacher		Goals for students[1]							
	Number (in thousands)	Percent of teachers	Basic literacy skills	Academic excellence	Citizenship	Specific occup. skills	Good work habits and self-discipline	Personal growth	Human relations skills	Moral or religious values
Total	404	100	48	22	3	2	28	40	14	43
Orientation										
Catholic	185	46	49	20	2	1	26	40	13	49
Other religious	127	31	47	21	2	1	24	33	10	60
Nonsectarian	92	23	48	28	4	3	37	50	21	8
Type/level[2]										
Elementary	190	47	52	15	2	1	26	41	13	50
Secondary	83	20	41	33	4	2	31	36	14	39
Combined	96	24	48	29	4	1	27	33	11	47
Other	35	9	44	16	2	3	34	62	27	12
Sex of teacher										
Male	97	24	43	31	5	2	28	34	15	42
Female	307	76	50	19	2	1	28	42	13	44
Years of experience										
Less than 5 years	100	25	54	19	2	2	28	42	15	38
5-9 years	109	27	49	21	3	1	28	40	13	45
10 or more years	195	48	45	24	3	2	28	39	14	45

[1]Percents do not add to 100 because of combining two categories.

[2]Elementary, secondary, and combined are regular schools, while other schools are primarily special education and alternative schools.

Table 3.--Percent of private school teachers agreeing or disagreeing with various statements relating to their schools: United States, 1985-86

School-related statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Positive direction*
Staff members in this school generally don't have much school spirit.....	38	27	15	11	6	3	79
Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.....	4	6	7	13	34	36	83
The level of student misbehavior and/or drug or alcohol use in this school interferes with my teaching.....	54	25	7	7	4	3	86
The principal does a poor job of getting resources for this school.....	50	25	10	7	4	4	85
The amount of student tardiness and class cutting in this school interferes with my teaching.....	64	19	6	6	3	2	89
The principal knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff.....	4	5	6	10	26	48	84
The administration knows the problems faced by the staff.....	5	7	8	16	29	34	80
The school's administration's behavior toward the staff is supportive and encouraging.....	4	5	7	13	27	43	84
Necessary materials are readily available as needed by the staff.....	4	5	8	16	29	38	83
The teachers and administration are in close agreement on school discipline policy.....	4	5	7	15	34	34	84
The attitudes and habits my students bring to my class greatly reduce their chances for academic success....	32	31	11	12	9	5	74
There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members.....	2	3	6	15	33	41	88
Staff members maintain high standards of performance for themselves.....	1	2	3	13	40	40	93
This school seems like a big family, everyone is so close and cordial.....	3	6	10	23	31	27	81
The principal lets staff members know what is expected of them.....	3	5	7	14	33	38	85
The principal is interested in innovation and new ideas.....	4	4	7	16	30	40	85

*Percent of teachers who agreed with positive statements and who disagreed with negative statements. Calculated using unrounded figures, reported rounded to the nearest percent.

NOTE.--Percents are based on 404,000 teachers. Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Table 4.--Percent of private school teachers who strongly disagreed with selected opinion statements regarding students, by school and teacher characteristics: United States, 1985-86

School and teacher characteristic	Student misbehavior and/or drug and alcohol use interferes with my teaching	Student tardiness and class cutting interferes with my teaching	Students' attitudes and habits greatly reduce chances for academic success
Total.....	54	64	32
Orientation			
Catholic.....	58	70	32
Other religious....	54	60	31
Nonsectarian.....	49	55	34
Type/level*			
Elementary.....	58	72	38
Secondary.....	53	55	25
Combined.....	55	60	30
Other.....	36	46	24
Sex of teacher			
Male.....	46	50	23
Female.....	57	68	35
Years of experience			
Less than 5.....	41	58	28
5 - 9.....	57	64	32
10 or more.....	60	66	35

*Elementary, secondary, and combined are regular schools, while other schools are primarily special education and alternative schools.

Table 5.--Percent of private school teachers who strongly agreed with selected opinion statements regarding principals, by school and teacher characteristics: United States, 1985-86

School and teacher characteristic	Principal lets staff know what is expected of them	Principal is interested in innovation and new ideas	Administrations' behavior toward staff is supportive and encouraging
Total.....	38	40	43
Orientation			
Catholic.....	39	38	43
Other religious....	39	42	49
Nonsectarian.....	35	40	36
Type/level*			
Elementary.....	43	44	47
Secondary.....	27	27	33
Combined.....	36	37	44
Other.....	40	50	46
Sex of teacher			
Male.....	27	28	35
Female.....	42	43	46
Years of experience			
Less than 5.....	37	41	44
5 - 9.....	36	36	42
10 or more.....	40	41	44

*Elementary, secondary, and combined are regular schools, while other schools are primarily special education and alternative schools.

Table 6.--Percent of private school teachers who strongly agreed with selected opinion statements regarding teachers, by school and teacher characteristics: United States, 1985-86

School and teacher characteristic	Teachers and administration are in close agreement on school discipline policy	Staff members maintain high standards of peformance for themselves	There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members
Total.....	34	40	41
Orientation			
Catholic.....	32	37	39
Other religious....	41	41	44
Nonsectarian.....	29	43	39
Type/level*			
Elementary.....	38	44	44
Secondary.....	21	27	27
Combined.....	37	41	43
Other.....	39	43	45
Sex of teacher			
Male.....	24	31	29
Female.....	38	42	44
Years of experience			
Less than 5.....	36	36	40
5 - 9.....	34	39	40
10 or more.....	34	42	41

*Elementary, secondary, and combined are regular schools, while other schools are primarily special education and alternative schools.

Table 7.--Coefficients of variation for selected items

Item	Estimate	Coefficient of variation
Number of private school teachers		
In all schools	404,000	6.7
In Catholic schools	185,000	7.5
In nonsectarian schools	92,000	17.0
In secondary schools	83,000	7.9
With 10 or more years teaching experience	195,000	7.1
Male teachers	97,000	7.6
Female tachers	307,000	7.0
Full-time teachers	336,000	6.2
Percent of private school teachers		
In Catholic schools	46	5.9
In combined schools	24	7.7
Male teachers	24	4.5
Female teachers	76	1.4
With less than a bachelor's degree	5	10.9
With a bachelor's degree	64	2.4
With an advanced degree	31	5.4
Who ranked basic literacy skills as very important	48	2.4
Who ranked human relations skills as very important	14	7.3
In Catholic schools who ranked good work habits as very important	26	4.9
In secondary schools who ranked basic literacy skills as very important	41	3.3
Male teachers who ranked academic exellence as very important	31	7.7
Who strongly disagreed with the statements:		
Student misbehavior and/or drug use interferes with my teaching	54	3.2
Student tardiness and class cutting interferes with my teaching	64	2.5
Who strongly agreed with the statements:		
Principal lets staff know what is expected of them	38	3.8
Principal is interested in innovation and new ideas	40	2.7
Administration's behavior towards staff is supportive and encouraging	43	2.8